



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

April 24, 2003

Ms. Tenley Aldredge
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767

OR2003-2747

Dear Ms. Aldredge:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 179977.

The County of Travis (the "county") received a request for any information pertaining to seven named individuals who all live at a particular address, and information regarding a particular assault and a particular theft. You state that you have released some of the requested information. However, you claim that some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Under *United States Department of Justice v. Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749 (1989), where an individual's criminal history information has been compiled or summarized by a governmental entity, the information takes on a character that implicates the individual's right of privacy in a manner that the same individual records in an uncompiled state do not. Thus, when a requestor asks for unspecified information concerning a certain named individual and that individual is a possible suspect, arrestee, or defendant, a law enforcement agency must withhold this information under section 552.101 because that individual's privacy right has been implicated. *See id.* In this instance, we believe that the named individuals' privacy rights have been implicated by the request. Thus, any records in which any of the named individuals are identified as a suspect, arrestee, or offender must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code and *Reporters Committee*.

Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides as follows:

(a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

(1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and

(2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Because report number 00-14267 relates to an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the report falls within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the county has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, report number 00-14267 is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute). Accordingly, the county must withhold this report from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.

We now turn to your arguments with regard to the remaining information. Section 552.108(a)(2) excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate that the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on the information you provided, we understand you to assert that report number 99-21096 pertains to a case that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, we agree that section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to that report.

However, section 552.108 is inapplicable to basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense and arrest information, you may withhold the report number 99-21096 from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(2). We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of the remaining information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007. As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining arguments.

In summary, you must withhold any records in which any of the named individuals are identified as a suspect, arrestee, or offender under section 552.101 and *Reporters Committee*. You must withhold report number 00-14267 under section 552.101 and section 261.201 of the Family Code. You may withhold report number 99-21096, with the exception of basic information, under section 552.108(a)(2).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer E. Berry".

Jennifer E. Berry
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JEB/sdk

Ref: ID# 179977

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Jeanett Roan
6224 Wagon Bend
Austin, Texas 78744
(w/o enclosures)